

"unofficial translation"

Warsaw, November 17, 1999

The Honorable Members
of the United States House of Representatives

I would like to thank you for your letter of October 13, 1999 regarding the issues surrounding reprivatization in Poland. I appreciate your expression of support for the Polish Government and Parliament as we endeavor to successfully resolve this complex historical problem that democratic government of Poland has inherited from its repressive predecessors. Legal and financial matters we are dealing with are an outcome of decisions which were followed by multiple layers of additional decisions that took place more than fifty years ago.

The challenge facing Poland is much greater than any other country in Central Europe has had to face in this respect. Polish Parliament - the Sejm - chose to address reprivatizing communal property as its first priority. In 1997 the Sejm successfully adopted a bill that resolved this first issue.

The injustice done to a wide array of property owners during the Nazi occupation in Poland (1939-1945), and also later under the Communist regime (until 1989) was enormous. It is very difficult today to right all the wrongs of the past. That includes determining which principles should guide the process of just compensation and how much compensation should be paid to those who were wrongly deprived of their property.

I would like to add here that reprivatization includes not only Holocaust victims, but also many other people who were harmed by unlawful practices during the Nazi occupation in Poland and later under Communist rule.

The draft reprivatization bill recently submitted by the Government to the Sejm attempts to provide a comprehensive solution aimed at resolving historical wrongs fairly, while also realistically taking into account Poland's financial capabilities. At this moment, the parliamentary process needed to debate and pass the reprivatization bill has been put into motion.

I appreciate your letter and support for our efforts to resolve a unique problem that a great majority of world countries fortunately has not had to deal with.

The Sejm of the Republic of Poland will do everything in its power to write a just conclusion to this chapter of our nation's history as soon as possible.

Sincerely yours,

Maciej Płażyński
Speaker of the Sejm